

Parish Council Report for period up to 10 May 2017
Cllr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Mortimer Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

WBC held its annual meeting yesterday (9 May), commencing with a one minute silence in memory of Cllr Roger Croft, and his wife Zelda.

Elections/Appointments

The following were elected/appointed for 2017/18:

Chairman of Council	Quentin Webb
Vice-Chairman of Council	Carol Jackson-Doerge (<i>Burghfield</i>)
Leader of Council	Graham Jones
Deputy Leader of Council	Hilary Cole
Executive:	Leader, plus Strategy: Graham Jones
	Deputy Leader, plus Planning, Housing and Leisure: Hilary Cole
	Adult Social Care: Rick Jones
	Community Resilience and Partnerships: Marcus Franks
	Corporate Services and External Affairs: Keith Chopping (<i>Sulhamstead</i>)
	Culture and Environment: Dominic Boeck
	Education, Children and Young People: Lynne Doherty
	Finance and Transformation, including Economic Development: Anthony Chadley
	Health and Wellbeing: James Fredrickson
	Highways and Transport: Jeanette Clifford

We also agreed the committee structure (as before, but with a new structure for the scrutiny function involving the appointment of a group of backbench scrutineers who will, inter alia, join the individual project groups associated with the Corporate Programme) and then had the annual (and somewhat surreal) 'stand up and sit down' committee meetings to elect Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen.

I have been re-elected as Chairman of the Licensing Committee and remain on the Eastern Area Planning Committee, the Governance and Ethics Committee and the Appeals Panel. I have also taken Keith Chopping's place on the Financial Challenge Panel looking at budget issues going forward. I am also remaining as a WBC appointee on the AWE Local Liaison Committee and the Padworth Common Advisory Committee, and as a substitute member of the Wokefield Common Advisory Committee.

Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document - the DPD

The DPD, incorporating the main modifications as set out in the Inspector's Report and certain other minor modifications, was adopted at the meeting. This triggers a six week period within which there may be an application to the High Court (s.113, Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) to the effect that there was a lack of power to make the DPD or procedural requirement has not been complied with.

Assuming there is no challenge, the sites for development throughout the district over and above those in the Core Strategy (but excluding Mortimer – see below) will be established, and the new planning policies (eg relating to building in the countryside) will have been adopted. The recent Benhams Farm, Burghfield, appeal decision (dismissal of appeal against rejection of application for 43 dwellings outside settlement boundary) indicates that the (then emerging) policies are being followed.

Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan

To put the item before the meeting yesterday into context, the purpose of the report we considered was stated to be:

“To consider the officer recommendation that the examiner’s decision on the [NDP] (ie that it should not proceed to referendum) is not followed and the NDP does progress to referendum. This is as a result of new landscape evidence which [WBC] officers consider overcomes the concerns raised by the examiner in his report”.

The motion, which I had pleasure in seconding, was passed, and the referendum notice is anticipated to be issued on 17 May, with the vote anticipated to be held on 22 June (unfortunately the timescales in the legislation are such that the vote cannot take place alongside the General Election on 8 June). WBC Strategic Support are meeting today (10 May) to map out the process.

See further about the NDP below.

West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Preferred Options Consultation

The meeting approved the publication of the consultation for a six week period in accordance with the West Berkshire Statement of Community Involvement, together with the publication of various supporting documents. Full details will be found on the WBC website.

Property Investment Strategy

We also agreed a property investment strategy, further to the strategy agreed at the March budget meeting, designed to meet WBC’s objectives of creating a balanced property investment portfolio, from which to derive a long term, sustainable revenue stream.

The Vulnerable Homeless

A five year contract, from 1 April, is designed to provide £1.2m in accommodation based housing support services over eight years at Bramlings House in Newbury - providing housing and support to up to 38 people, including couples, within 13 self-contained flats and two six-bed shared flats.

Funding of £160k per year will help towards the services for young people and young parents aged 16-25 including one-to-one support, a nominated lead worker for parent and child clients, and help with access to employment, education or training. In addition there will be provision in the accommodation for an emergency ‘crash pad’ facility for up to three people at any one time for an agreed short term period.

Children’s Services

It has been a busy month for the service with increases in demand reflecting the national picture and unaccompanied asylum seeking children continuing to turn up spontaneously in the area – there are currently 16 such children being supported by WBC.

WBC currently has 163 children in its care and 153 on child protection plans. Of the children in care there are 15 with special educational needs and disabilities.

The unique and innovative Emotional Health Academy has now been running for 10 months and in that time has supported 600 children. Feedback is consistently positive, there is national interest to roll out to other areas.

Members' Community Bid

I have not received any proposals and given that the cut-off date is 15 May time is about to run out.

New WBC customer number

WBC has changed its customer switchboard number from 01635 42400 to 01635 551111. The out-of-hours emergency number remains 01635 42161.

(Although more and more services are being accessed on-line, WBC still receives more than 2,300 calls per week, with around half being dealt with by the Contact Centre.)

Local Issues

M4 Junctions 12 to 13 - Bridge Refurbishment

The next weekend closure of the M4 is planned from 21:00 on Friday (12 May) through to 06:00 on Monday (15 May). There is also a contingency weekend proposed for Friday 2 to Monday 5 June.

Parishes

Beech Hill

Trunkwell

I have not heard anything further about the stayed appeal or a planning application.

Padworth

Padworth waste site

There is as yet no news about the new planning applications to allow for general household waste to be accepted and to extend the opening hours.

Mill Lane

Further to the Padworth PC meeting on Monday (8 May) I have put Cllr Murray in touch with the appropriate person at WBC's contractors (Volker Highways) regarding the possibility of obtaining planings to fill in potholes, etc.

Stratfield Mortimer

NDP

In the same way that the (then emerging) DPD policies were followed in the Benhams Farm appeal (see above), the emerging NDP policies have been noted by WBC in relation to the Tower House site (mentioned below) - I recently had correspondence with Gareth Dowding (Senior Engineer, WBC Transport & Countryside) regarding street lighting for the development, after he referred to the Village Design Statement. I pointed him to the emerging NDP policy on lighting (GD4) and he has taken this on board, saying that "unless there is a Road Safety Audit objection to no street lighting the development will not be lit".

Mortimer Library

I have noted the email exchanges regarding a meeting to discuss the library service in the east of the district, and the difficulties over finding an agreed date, and await further communications.

Tower House site

I refer to the question of street lighting for the development above.

A date for the appeal hearing is still awaited and it should be noted that previously restricted affordable housing viability calculations are now available on-line to refer to.

St John's School pedestrian crossing

A brief period of public consultation is underway (the Horse & Groom being the only consultee!).

The Street resurfacing

I am waiting to be notified of a start date, but am told that the work will be completed during school holidays (no earlier than August) and should last no longer than five days under a full road closure, with advance notice signs being displayed two weeks prior to work commencing.

Ufton Nervet

Gigaclear

Further to the discussion at the Annual Meeting regarding community broadband, you will no doubt have seen a recent email that Gigaclear are starting to build their new ultrafast fibre network in Ufton Nervet (individuals can check whether they will be included in the improvements by using the postcode checker on the Gigaclear website www.gigaclear.com/postcode-checker/superfastberkshire).

Graham Bridgman

10 May 2017